

# *Lower Eastern Shore Tributary Team*

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## **About the Watershed:**

The Lower Eastern Shore Watershed includes Worcester, Somerset, Wicomico, most of Dorchester, and a portion of Caroline Counties. It drains the Nanticoke, Wicomico, Manokin, and the Big and the Little Annemessex Rivers. The predominant land use in the basin is agriculture, making nutrient management on agricultural lands and habitat restoration priorities for the Lower Eastern Shore Tributary Team.

## **About the Team:**

The mission of the Lower Eastern Shore Tributary Team is to reduce nutrient and sediment inputs and to restore habitat in the Lower Eastern Shore Watershed through community participation. With this mission in mind, the team spent much of 2001 and 2002 building successful partnerships and increasing membership. Partnerships were utilized to combine resources, technical expertise, and creative project ideas. These partnerships involved a variety of constituencies, including state and local elected officials, county planners, wastewater treatment plant operators, waterfront homeowners, and environmental organizations. Phil Hager served as team chair for all of 2001 until the end of 2002 when Matt Hedger assumed the chairmanship.

For the past 5 years, the team concentrated on nutrient reduction initiatives. The *Chesapeake 2000 Agreement*, however, includes habitat restoration as an important component to restoring the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries. Starting in 2001, the team decided to expand its focus to include habitat restoration. This new emphasis provides the team with increased opportunities to engage new stakeholders, to expand membership, to conduct hands-on restoration projects, and to help reduce nutrient inputs to the basin's rivers.

## **2001-2002 Accomplishments:**

- The team spent much of 2001 and 2002 recruiting and engaging new and diverse local organizations on the team. Several members reached out to other local environmental organizations to encourage their representation on the team. Members also participated in the Tributary Strategies Program's "New Participant Picnic," which was held at the Horsehead Wetlands Center in Grasonville on July 26, 2001 to introduce potential partners to the program and highlight issues relating to their local basins. As a result of these efforts, a strong connection was formed with Salisbury University and the Salisbury Zoo, and the team's partnerships with the Nanticoke Watershed Alliance; the Eastern Shore Resource, Conservation and Development Council; and local planning offices were solidified. The team hopes to use these valuable, new partnerships to increase awareness and participation in the issues facing the Lower Shore region.
- The team hosted its 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Wade-Ins along the banks of the beautiful Nanticoke River. Created 15 years ago by retired State Senator Bernie Fowler, volunteers wade into a river until they can no longer see their white sneakers. This "Sneaker Index" is a non-technical method of measuring water clarity that gets residents involved in their watershed. The 2002 wade-in was held in Vienna. The wade-in started off with team members listening as a passage was read from Tom Horton's *Bay Country* entitled "Bernie's Toes." Afterwards, everyone joined hands and walked into the river. The team plans to continue this yearly tradition to educate and involve area citizens and to develop a long-term indicator of the river's health.
- Throughout 2001 and 2002, the team continued to be involved in the Chesapeake Forest Acquisition project, which involves the conservation of 58,000 acres of Eastern Shore lands. Members keep apprised of current activities and actively participate in public meetings to assist in the project's management planning. Team member names were submitted to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources for consideration as members of the Chesapeake Forest Citizen Advisory Committee, which includes both local government representatives and other valuable stakeholders.

- Somerset County received a grant from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources in 2000 to develop a Watershed Restoration Action Strategy (WRAS) for the Manokin Watershed. The WRAS is a partnership between the counties and the state to assess the watershed, identify problem areas, and to develop a restoration strategy. The final strategy included monitoring two subwatersheds, conducting a study and cost share for liming a subwatershed to bring up the Ph, encouraging farmers to plant trees around agricultural buildings, retaining a strong commitment to cover crops and cost share programs, and conducting a lawn care/homeowner campaign using local billboards, targeted brochures, and commercials. The steering committee asked the team to partner in the educational campaign and fish passage projects. The team is looking into potential funding opportunities for these projects and hopes to lend its nonpoint source pollution media materials to the project and to support fish passage research.
- In 2001, the Tributary Strategies Program acquired Nonpoint Source Pollution Educational materials that were originally produced by the Washington State University's Department of Ecology with a grant from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The materials encourage residents to limit fertilizer use, clean up after pets, wash cars on grass or gravel instead of the street, and repair cars that leak oil. The EPA urged the distribution of these materials to other watershed organizations, and the Lower Eastern Shore Team took advantage of the opportunity. Several posters, flyers, and 30 second commercials were created as an education and Tributary Team awareness effort. The Tributary Strategies Program paid for 6 weeks of airtime to broadcast the commercials throughout the Delmarva Peninsula during the morning and afternoon news on WBOC-TV 16 out of Salisbury. Evaluation of this project is underway and plans for future releases are being considered for the Eastern Shore, statewide, and especially in conjunction with the Manokin WRAS.
- In 2002, the team in partnership with the Nanticoke Watershed Alliance and the Maryland Conservation Corps, stenciled storm drains at the Center in Salisbury. The goal of this project was to provide some outreach and education to the community about nonpoint source pollution. The Chesapeake Bay Foundation provided the supplies with grant funds from the Chesapeake Bay Trust. The team plans to continue this project in Salisbury and to expand it to other towns, such as Crisfield, Snow Hill, Princess Anne, Hebron, and Sharptown.
- The team established a tree grow-out station at Parkside High School in the spring of 2002. The grow-out station was created to educate and engage students in a restoration project and to supply schools and residential property owners with trees for riparian areas. A total of 500 seedlings were obtained from the John S. Ayton State Tree Nursery. These along with additional supplies were funded by a grant from the Maryland Department of Natural Resources and administered through the Eastern Shore Resource, Conservation and Development Council. The species were all native to the Lower Shore basin and included pin oak, Sassafras, sweet gum, Eastern red cedar, and water oak. Parkside students potted the seedlings, weeded and watered them over the summer months, and planted the trees on their school property in the fall. They plan to continue the project in 2003, growing an additional 400 trees and providing them to other Wicomico County schools.
- On May 16, 2002, the Tributary Team chairs and vice-chairs met with Governor Parris Glendening to thank him for his support during his term as Governor and to present some issues that the teams felt were crucial to the protection and restoration of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. Some of these issues included stormwater, the Water Quality Improvement Act, cover crops, Living Shorelines, and oysters. Following the Tributary Team presentations, the Governor's Local Government, Citizens, Scientific and Technical, State Water Quality, and Coastal and Watershed Resources Advisory Committees reported out on their current work and the opportunities they foresaw to work with the Tributary Teams.
- During 2002, several team members assisted in developing an informational brochure for landowners about shoreline erosion and soft shoreline stabilization practices. The Upper Eastern Shore Tributary Team first

started this initiative in the fall of 2001 and encouraged other teams to partner in the effort. The Critical Areas Commission, Environmental Review, the Watershed Restoration Division of the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, the Tributary Strategies Program, and Wicomico County Planning and Zoning created a brochure to educate homeowners about soft shoreline stabilization practices. The goal is to educate waterfront landowners about soft stabilization practices so that they will consider them when looking into measures to protect their shoreline.

### **2003 Priorities:**

- Elections will be held at the beginning of the year to find a new chair for the team. The team will also seek nominations for a team vice-chair and a Tributary Strategies Subcommittee.
- The team plans to work with local governments and the Tributary Strategies Development Workgroup to prepare the Tributary Strategy for the Lower Eastern Shore basin. Public meetings will be set for the summer and fall of 2003 to introduce the public to the Tributary Strategies Program and to solicit comments for the draft strategy.
- The team plans to maintain its tree grow-out station at Parkside High school by potting and growing an additional 400 native seedlings that will be planted on Wicomico County public lands. In the fall of 2003, the team will conduct outreach activities to other schools, parks, watershed organizations, and homeowners in Wicomico County to give away the trees for riparian buffer projects.
- The team plans to hold its 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Wade-In at Roaring Point in Wicomico County on the Nanticoke River. The county purchased this park and saved it from development with the help of the Friends of the Nanticoke and the Nanticoke Watershed Alliance.
- Team members from Wicomico and Worcester Counties plan to investigate options to apply for a Pocomoke River WRAS.
- The team plans to have several presentations in the upcoming year on alternative wastewater treatment strategies, such as spray irrigation. Most of the wastewater treatment plants in the basin are in the design or planning phases of installing nitrogen removal. These plants will be working with the Maryland Department of the Environment's Biological Nutrient Removal (BNR) and Enhanced Nutrient Removal (ENR) Programs.
- The three Eastern Shore teams (the Lower Eastern, Upper Eastern, and Choptank) will try to schedule a meeting with the Eastern Shore Delegation during the 2003 legislative session to discuss some of the environmental priorities on the Shore. They also hope to have regular discussions with the Bay Workgroup and the Governor's Bay Cabinet.

### **2001 Ellen Fraites Wagner Awardee**

At the February 23, 2002 Tributary Team Annual Meeting, the Chesapeake Bay Trust presented Ilia Fehrer with the 2001 Ellen Fraites Wagner Award. This award recognizes a Maryland citizen for exceptional volunteer contributions to the protection and restoration of the Chesapeake Bay and its rivers. Ilia was recognized for all of her work for the Lower Eastern Shore and the Chesapeake Bay. She has been an active participant on the Lower Eastern Shore Tributary Team for several years and has spent a lifetime speaking out for wilderness waterways and land preservation. She led several local campaigns and was involved in designating the Potomac as a "Wild and Scenic River" and creating the Nassawango Creek Preserve. She led efforts to stop a proposed dam and to permanently protect more than 41,000 acres in southern Worcester County. She initiated the Pocomoke Water Quality Testing Program and led hundreds of canoe trips and wetland, forest, and beach activities for local organizations, school groups, and the media. In addition to her work for the Chesapeake Bay Watershed, she has helped preserve Assateague Island and the Coastal Bays.

The team award recognizes the team member who has made significant contributions to the team and the watershed. Team members and participants nominate the awardee and final determinations are made by the chair and vice-chair of the team. The awardee receives a Governor's citation at the annual meeting and press releases of their award and contributions are distributed to their local and state newspapers.

### **2001 Team Awardee**

At the 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Tributary Team Meeting held on February 23, 2002, Tee O'Connor was awarded the 2001 Lower Eastern Shore Team Award. Tee has been one of the cornerstones of the team over the past 4 years and has shown her dedication to the team and its watershed in a variety of ways. She is a member of the Friends of the Nanticoke, was a key figure in the creation of the Nanticoke Watershed Alliance, and resides on the Board of Directors of the Lower Eastern Shore Heritage Committee. Tee actively participated in the purchase of Roaring Point – a county park in the Nanticoke River Watershed – and was appointed to serve as a member of the Greenways Advisory Board for Wicomico County. She participated in the 1999 Water Resources Leadership Initiative, assisted in clean-ups along the Nanticoke River, and is an active participant in the annual Shad Festival in Vienna. In 2001, Tee worked to develop a partnership with the Salisbury Zoo and the Nanticoke Watershed Alliance on various projects.

### **2002 Team Awardee**

Matthew Hedger was awarded the 2002 Lower Eastern Shore Team Award at the 7<sup>th</sup> Annual Tributary Team Annual Meeting that was held on February 1, 2003. Matthew has been a motivated member of the Lower Eastern Shore Team for several years, providing the team with a local government perspective through his work with the Wicomico County Department of Planning and Zoning. In 2002, Matthew took office as vice-chair of the team and has since led the team in various projects, such as chairing the tree grow-out project in partnership with Wicomico County and Parkside High School. Matthew worked with a statewide interagency group to create a brochure for homeowners educating them about Living Shorelines and Critical Areas. He also created a brochure for Wicomico County to educate residents about the Salisbury/Wicomico County Critical Areas Program. Through his job with the county, Matthew also develops land planning and forest conservation and delineation plans.

**Team Members**

Matthew Hedger, Chair, Wicomico County  
Planning & Zoning  
Dave Mister, State Contact, MD Dept. of  
Agriculture  
Russ Brinsfield, Center for Agro-Ecology  
Christian Canary, Eastern Shore Resource  
Conservation and Development  
Glenn Carowan Jr., U.S. Fish and Wildlife  
Service  
Robert Davis, Farmer  
Ilia Fehrer, Worcester Environmental Trust  
Jeff Fisher, Glatfelter Pulp Wood Company  
Sam Geleta, Salisbury University  
W. Turp Garrett, Citizen  
Alan Girard, Chesapeake Bay Foundation  
Phil Hager, US Army Corps of  
Engineers  
Joan Kean, Somerset Planning & Zoning  
Billie Laws, Worcester Forestry Board  
Jim Newcomb, Dorchester Soil  
Conservation District  
Michael Sigrist, USDA Natural Resources  
Conservation Service  
Jennifer Tomlinson, Citizen  
Carolyn Turner, Citizen  
Sandra Wetzel, Pemberton Park  
David Winslow, City of Salisbury  
Wastewater Treatment Plant  
Harry Womack, Salisbury University

**Team Participants**

Angela Baldwin, Maryland Conservation  
Corps  
Blair Catlin, Chesapeake Bay Foundation  
John Cawley, City of Salisbury  
Q Johnson, citizen  
Tom Lawton, Somerset Planning & Zoning  
Annie Williams, Davis, Bowen, & Friedel,  
Inc.

**Team Coordinator**

Stephanie Blades, MD Dept. of Natural  
Resources

**For More Information:**

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website at [www.dnr.state.md.us/bay/tribstrat/](http://www.dnr.state.md.us/bay/tribstrat/).